Why Some Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers Don't See UAPJames McClenahenAir Traffic Control Specialist (ret.)NARCAP Technical SpecialistNARCAP headquarters received an interesting report concerning a UAPsighting on August 1, 2001 near Chicago's O'Hare airport at 2015local time. A cylindrically shaped self-luminous, orange/goldcolored object without wings or tail was seen between O'Hare andMidway airports and appeared to fly faster than other jet aircraftseen at the same time but at similar altitudes. It allegedly sloweddown as a B-757 commercial aircraft took off to the west from Midwayand then accelerated out of sight to the NE. Both past the witnesseslocation in clear view. Since this part of the nation handles some ofthe highest air traffic density in the country there is extensiveradar coverage available to help maintain traffic separation. Theairport control towers at these airports also afford excellent 360degree visibility for tens of miles in good visibility conditions. Weasked our ATC specialist, Jim McClenahen to comment on thisinteresting case. Here are his surprising comments.--------------------------------------------------------Nice to hear from you. My first take on this is that it would belike finding a needle in the haystack but would be worth a try. Thereason I say this, the controllers and cockpit crews in the Chicagoterminal area are extremely busy. There is so much information beingpassed between controllers and cockpit crews due to traffic volumewhich requires everyone to really pay attention to all details, so,when something like this happens the chances of the controllers orcockpit crews experiencing it are slim.I will try to find a contact source in the tower, but we havesomewhat of a blind spot, because of the complexity of the airspace.Example, the report made reference of a B 757 departing Midway, thecockpit crew of this flight was in the middle of departing, climbing,cleaning up the aircraft for initial climb, and making a radio changeto departure control (Chicago TRACON). My point is, this crew isbusy and on top of that they are listening for any traffic andwatching their TCAS for traffic too!The B727 mentioned was probably on Chicago Approach talking to eithera feeder controller or the final controller, being set up for therunway complex the flight to land on. The report indicates theweather was VFR and it is a good possibility the approaches in usewere ILS and Visuals. This means the cockpit crew was also extremelybusy. Not only were they setting up the aircraft for landing, theywere probably looking for traffic they were following so they couldconduct the visual approach. They were also watching for othertraffic and monitoring their TCAS equipment while expecting afrequency change to the tower once they completed setting up for thevisual.In addition, the approach controller would not really have time toobserve anything unusual on the radar (ASR-9, which is a digitalpresentation). If that controller was busy, he would be watchingonly the aircraft he was working. This holds true for the towercontrollers as well. When they get more traffic to handle, theyconcentrate on the aircraft they are working. They focus outsurrounding items that are not important to them.I hope this makes sense to you and please ask questions or if youwant. I can call you and discuss this further on the phone. Iwould guess if anyone saw anything from the tower, it would be someonenot directly working aircraft such as a supervisor, a coordinator, ortraffic management specialist, maybe even a person working flightdata/clearance delivery. Of course this is just a guess based on myexperience.